

4-08--2005

To: House Committee on Agriculture

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee on Public Law 106-393, and uses of Title 1,2 funding resources.

My name is Jim French, and I am Trinity County Supt. of Schools, and Chairman of the Trinity County Resource Advisory Council. I also serve on the board of the National Forest Counties & Schools Coalition which contributed significantly to the current law.

Trinity County is a large, rural, mountainous county in N. California of which 76% is national forest. We are the second largest recipient of Forest Reserve dollars in California, once being a large timber producer on national forest land. Trinity County receives a total of \$7,730,027 , \$6,570,523.20 in Title 1 is annually split equally between roads and schools, \$927,603.25 in Title 2, and \$231,900.81 in Title 3 funding.

Re: Title 1 funding for schools

Forest Reserve funding has been an integral part of Trinity County school funding for over 40 years, and is essential to our continued success. These funds provide for instruction aides in our many mutli-graded classrooms, implementing the federal No Child Left Behind requirements. In my county schools office the funds are used to provide school nurses, counselors, art and music programs. Forest Reserve funds additionally fund under funded Special Education programs. A wide array of student programs without dedicated program funding are funded under Forest Reserve, our annual Spelling Bee, Academic Decathlon, Young Author's Faire, and Young Artist's Workshop to name a few.

In an era of declining student population (24.4% since 1996), and declining school revenue, without Forest Reserve funding, our schools would have to eliminate the majority of our instruction aides, and programs listed above. Additionally the four largest school districts, and my county schools office would file qualified, or negative budgets with the state, citing the inability to meet our financial obligations.

Our declining student population is due in great part to the changing forest practices, and associated local economy loss, which in turn necessitates greater need for Forest Reserve funding. I believe that our situation is a common one in rural resource dependent America.

**Re: Resource Advisory Committees authorized under
PL-106-393**

I also am chairman of the Trinity County Resource Advisory Committee. Our county is the second largest contributor to both Title 2 & 3 programs in California, and we dedicate the largest funding amounts to Title 2 projects by percentage, and actual dollar amounts in California. To date we have expended \$3,356,086 on Title 2 projects within our county boundaries.

Below are features of our successful RAC, which may serve new, or future RACs.

- 1. Our RAC established clear agreed upon strategies. Early on we decided to focus on Fuel Reduction projects that helped to protect rural communities at risk, and watershed projects that restored, and reduced sediments in our streams, and rivers. Ten percent of our Title 2 funds are distributed to other allowable projects such as trail maintenance, and work with our Native American community.**
- 2. We identified ground rules for participation that define the parameters of disagreement. In our RAC the rule is: conduct yourself so that you could be invited to dinner by any member after any meeting. The RAC process is really about building relationships, and then finding common ground (literally) for projects.**
- 3. Our RAC identified many partners to collaborate on program of work as well as funding. We dovetail all of our Fuels Projects with**

identified “Communities at Risk” as identified by our county Fire Safe Council Plan. Most our watershed projects have State Fish & Game, or Five County Salmonid matching dollars as part of the project.

- 4. We complete as much work as possible by grants and agreements to provide additional local work opportunity, and economic growth.**
- 5. We ask our County Commisioners to identify our Title 2 funding allocation early so our RAC has ample time to plan, and implement projects.**
- 6. We also schedule enough time in our RAC calendar to allow the process to work. Early on we met once a month, but now do most of our work in sub-committee format, and the full RAC meets up to four times a year to vote on projects.**
- 6. Ongoing productive relationships between county commissioners, the Forest Service, and schools are critical to RAC success. RACs should update County Commissioners on projects at least quarterly with the Forest Service in Attendance. Our RAC had two county supervisors on it.**

Attached for your review are just a few of the many photos taken on our RAC Monitoring Field Trips. They are representative of our many projects, with a focus on fuels projects that have generated some timber revenue. I’m proud to say that starting last year, we have been able to generate some saleable timber with our Fuels Reduction Projects, reducing the overall cost of the projects as shown in photos 1,2,3. I view the generation of RAC approved forest products as an essential feature of future RAC Fuels projects, and a partial funding source for reauthorization of this bill.

The fourth photo shows our Youth Crew marking sawlogs from our 33 mile Mad River Ridge Fuel break, our largest RAC fuels project.

It's been important to us and many RACs across the nation to have our future stewards of the land involved in projects.

_Also included as photo #5 is an article on our Big Red Truck RAC project which is credited with saving homes during the 4000 acre SIMMS Fire near Hyampom, California.

The RAC process has shown great promise for quality collaboration in our county, and across the nation. I think that members views of the how to manage our forests have grown. Preventing catastrophic wildfire, and restoring watersheds are essential to our forest futures, and RACs stand poised to continue the work outlined in the Healthy Forests Restoration Act.

It is critical in my county that Public Law 106-393 be reauthorized to provide continuing benefit to our children, forests, and communities maintaining the compact that the federal government made with rural counties many years ago. Thank you for your time, and thoughtful consideration, I'm happy to answer any questions.

**Respectfully submitted,
James B. French**

**Trinity County Supt. of Schools
Trinity County Resource Advisory Chairperson**